2005 and March, 2007 due to mismatch between demand and supply. The Government has taken a number of measures to increase the supply of cement in the market to cater to increased demand. These include facilitating import by reducing the import duty on cement to 'Nil', removal of countervailing duty and special additional customs duty. Further, MMTC Ltd., a Government of India enterprises, TANCEM, a State Government enterprises of Tamil Nadu and M/s. Puducherry Agro Services Industries Corporation (PASIC) have been given a special dispensation to import cement under the provisions of Cement (Quality Control) Order, 2003 to enable availability of significant quantities of imported cement in the market. With these mesaures, the average price of cement has stabilized to a large extent showing an increase of only 4.44% between March, 2007 and March, 2008. Government have also made it clear that it shall not condone cartelization and profiteering by cement companies.

Slow down in industrial production

2503. SHRIMATI JAYA BACHCHAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that industrial production in the country has slowed down to 5.3 per cent since last November;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the action taken to speed up the tempo of production?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) The industrial growth, measured in terms of Index of Industrial Production (IIP), was 5.1% during November, 2007. For the first 10 months of current financial year (April—January, 2007-08), the industrial growth was 8.7% compared to 11.2% during corresponding period of last year.

(b) and (c) In a market driven economy, the growth of various industries is influenced by market-forces of supply and demand. The deceleration of the industrial growth is due to a combination of factors such as rise in interest rates, rupee appreciation etc.

The Government has put in place various policies to promote broad based industrial growth. This includes, *inter-alia*, delicensing of industrial capacity, liberalization of foreign trade regime to provide better access to inputs at competitive prices, rationalization and reduction in duty rates of customs and central excise, better infrastructure support, and liberal FDI regime, etc.

In the Budget 2008-09, the Government has proposed reduction in excise duty across the board from 16% to 14% to boost the domestic demand for the manufacturing industry. In addition, the Government has also proposed reduction in excise duty from 16% to 12% in the Budget 2008-09 for Small Cars, Motorcycles, and Scooters etc. to give boost to the domestic consumer durable manufacturing industry.

Government has announced several relief measures for export oriented industries, which includes enhancement of the Duty Entitlement Pass Book (DEPB), reduction in Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC) premium by 10%, enhancement of the rates of duty drawback, interest subvention of pre-shipment and post-shipment credit, refund of service tax, raising the revenue ceiling for Vishesh Krishi and Gram Udyog Yojana.